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Recommended Citation

USU Jon M. Huntsman School of Business and Jeppson, Allie, "Tim Gardner Says Liberal Studies Degree Proved Good Foundation" (2012). *Jon M. Huntsman School of Business News Collection*. 163.

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Tim Gardner Says Liberal Studies Degree Proved Good Foundation

By Allie Jeppson



Tim Gardner is skilled at Jeopardy. His knack for remembering bits and pieces of random knowledge is a hidden talent he developed, in part because he earned his undergraduate degree in liberal studies.

"I had these plans," Dr. Gardner said. "I was going to be a clinical psychologist."

However, the psychology program at Bowling Green State University required a number of different foreign language courses, and foreign language was not one of Dr. Gardner's strengths. So instead of risking his GPA, Dr. Gardner decided to major in liberal studies, which would allow him to keep the psychology courses without the language requirement while maintaining his high GPA. It was the best of both worlds, but it wasn't the only reason for the switch.

As a student, Dr. Gardner read an article stating that most people, with the exception of those in vocations like physical therapy or medical technology, only use about 10% of the knowledge that they gained during their time at school, in their actual careers.

"I kiddingly say that I took the liberal studies degree to avoid the language," Dr. Gardner said. "That was part of it, but the other side was that I did want a broad-based undergraduate degree knowing I was going to go into grad school and wanted to prepare myself for a number of different things."

That broad base of knowledge that Dr. Gardner earned as an undergraduate is what continues to help him dominate at Jeopardy, but the expanding of his wide range of knowledge didn't stop there.

After earning a Masters at Ohio State University and working for the corporate office of the Odd Lots/Big Lots chain of stores, Dr. Gardner decided to earn his doctorate in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University. It was a program that produced a lot of business school professors and hosted some very management-oriented classes, Dr. Gardner said.

The diverse academic background from which Dr. Gardner comes, plays a part in the curriculum now used in his classes. He wants students to understand and to be able to identify what is right for their business based on their own circumstances.

"When I teach, I try to teach students skills that they can have in their back pocket to use and to get jobs and to succeed in their jobs," Dr. Gardner said. "So the way I teach is to try to get people to do projects and demonstrations in ways that are very similar to what they are going to do on the job."

When he is not working, Dr. Gardner and his family enjoy hiking, and skiing together.